
5.3. Rural Character Area

5.3.1. Introduction

- 5.3.1.1. The Rural Character Area extends from the coastal plains, inland up wide river valleys on river flats and terraces and includes extensive areas of both indigenous and introduced species forest. It is an extensive area, covering all that land not contained within the three other character classifications contained in this Plan, which is Natural Environments, Urban and Paparoa Character Areas.
- 5.3.1.2. The predominant economic activities within the area are currently extensive farming and forestry, although intensive agricultural activities and other forms of diversification are anticipated. There is, in particular, considerable potential for further development of forestry in the District.
- 5.3.1.3. The rules control the effects of activities on the environment and so ensure that the long-term ability of the land resource to cater for a wide range of activities in the future is not jeopardised. While some activities rely completely on the quality of the soil resource, others do not. Allowing a range of activities will contribute to the viability and sustainability of the rural community given the small population base at present. With activities which are not traditionally rural however, extra caution is needed so as to ensure that the amenities of the neighbours and rural community in general are not disrupted and that the activity does not detrimentally impact on soil quality. The Rural Character Area contains three zones - the Rural Zone, Rural Airport Zone and Cement Production Zone. The Rural Airport Zone contains additional controls to ensure that the take-off and climb-approach surfaces of Westport Airport are kept clear of distractions.
- 5.3.1.4. In those areas which are public conservation land, permission is required from the Department of Conservation to carry out any trade, business or occupation. A tourism or recreation concession or resource use licence must be obtained from the Department of Conservation. In cases where both resource consents and concessions or licences are required, there is potential for duplication of information. The preferred procedure for dealing with such situations is specified in Part 2.9 of the Plan.
- 5.3.1.5. On Crown land and land managed by the Department of Conservation, mechanisms are already in place to protect conservation values; the Council does not wish to unnecessarily duplicate consent procedures for potential applicants.

- 5.3.1.6. Part IIIA of the Forests Act 1949 promotes sustainable forest management and provides some control over vegetation clearance.
- 5.3.1.7. Until significant natural areas have been identified and included in the plan in accordance with policy 4.8.7.5, indigenous forestry harvesting carried out in accordance with Part IIIA of the Forests Act, or in the case of Timberlands West Coast Limited, a sustainable management plan approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as complying with the requirements of Part IIIA of the Forests Act, will be classified as a restricted discretionary activity. Other indigenous forestry harvesting will be a fully discretionary activity.
- 5.3.1.8. Within the Rural Character Area significant mineral resources exist. These resources have the potential to contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of the District. It is in the District's best interests that these be identified and where feasible utilised, provided that the adverse effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated and having regard to the natural areas and habitats in the Rural Character Area. The rules provide for the prospecting, exploration and mining of mineral resources within the Character Area, subject to compliance with standards and District wide rules.